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INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
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RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 3312
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1128
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 0998
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 1567
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHMFISS/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 000156

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/20/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [KCRM](#) [KWMN](#) [TX](#)
SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN'S IOM REP VIEWS NEW TIP LAW IS A STEP
IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

REF: A. 07 ASHGABAT 1387
[1](#)B. 07 ASHGABAT 1400

Classified By: CHARGE RICHARD E. HOAGLAND FOR REASONS 1.4 (B), (D)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Turkmenistan's International Organization for Migration (IOM) representative believes the signing of Turkmenistan's first law on trafficking of persons (reftels) is a step in the right direction. This law appears to be another attempt by Turkmenistan to comply with international standards in human rights reporting. However, government reticence to open dialogue on Turkmenistan's trafficking issues with the international community, as well as a refusal to make statistics public, remain serious impediments to real progress on TIP. Adding criminal penalties against traffickers to the Criminal Code and allowing international NGOs to openly assist victims would be a clear sign that the Government of Turkmenistan intends to adhere to international standards in deed as well as in word. END SUMMARY.

TURKMENISTAN'S FIRST TIP LEGISLATION

[1](#)2. (C) On January 18, IOM Senior Program Assistant Tahyr Seidov (please protect throughout) said the signing of Turkmenistan's first law on trafficking of persons (TIP), "Law on the Battle against Trafficking in Persons," is a step in the right direction. Seidov acknowledged that the TIP law lacks penalties against traffickers, but believes that the new law shows that the battle against TIP is going in the right direction in Turkmenistan. Seidov suggested that progress in other areas related to TIP will follow now that Turkmenistan has legislation. IOM would like to lead a working group on adding two or three articles to the Criminal Code, if it can obtain funding.

NO INTERNATIONAL TIP REPRESENTATIVES AT WORKSHOP

[1](#)3. (C) IOM held a November 27 workshop on drafting national anti-trafficking legislation for parliamentarians and officials from law enforcement agencies. Kyrgyz TIP experts,

one of whom wrote Kyrgyzstan's anti-trafficking law, led the workshop. Seidov said that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs requested that IOM refrain from inviting representatives of the international community to the workshop because of the subject's sensitivity. Turkmen participants in the workshop predicted that their country would have its own TIP law in the first quarter of 2008, but in fact, President Berdimuhamedov signed Turkmenistan's first TIP legislation on December 14, 2007. The official Russian-language government newspaper, "Neytralniy Turkmenistan," published the law on December 20.

TURKMENISTAN IS ALL FOR "MEETING INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS"

¶4. (C) Seidov believes that Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers/Minister of Foreign Affairs Rashid Meredov was key to pushing the TIP legislation through, and that the passage of this legislation is proof of Turkmenistan's eagerness to comply with "international standards." The TIP law is another indication of Turkmenistan's intention to comply with all international human rights instruments.

GENERAL PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE WILL DRIVE IMPLEMENTATION

¶5. (C) The General Prosecutor's Office is responsible for implementation of the new TIP law. Seidov said that the General Prosecutor's Office reports directly to the president's Commission on Law Enforcement Activities and oversees all law enforcement activities. Seidov saw the General Prosecutor's Office's role as responsible body as a positive sign, adding that it has "the reputation and the power to guarantee effective implementation (of the law)."

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PREDICTIONS, BOTH POSITIVE...AND NEGATIVE

¶6. (C) Seidov predicted that the adoption of the TIP law and follow-on legislation will increase IOM's capacity to assist TIP victims and to prevent TIP from occurring. He also predicted that the new law will allow IOM to work more openly in the region and internationally. On the other hand, Seidov predicted, economic changes in Turkmenistan, such as inflation and economic shock that could very possibly occur with the introduction of the unified exchange rate by January 2009, could also increase TIP in the future.

¶7. (C) COMMENT: IOM is the only reliable source for information on TIP in Turkmenistan, and therefore is post's only source for the annual TIP report. Seidov's expectation of an increase in ability to assist TIP victims and in codifying punishment for traffickers in the future is encouraging. Shoring up the Criminal Code with penalties against traffickers, and allowing international NGOs to assist TIP victims would be credible signs that Turkmenistan takes "meeting international standards" seriously, in deed as well as in word. If Seidov's prediction that IOM -- and the local NGOs that assist TIP victims, Keyik Okara, Bilgirje, and Bosfor -- will be allowed to work more openly in the future bears out, this could bode well for efforts to bring "public organizations" into the mainstream and the introduction of international NGOs. END COMMENT.
HOAGLAND